



Assemblymember Thomas Calderon Legislative Update

Serving residents of the 58th Assembly District

Volume 1, Issue 1
Winter, 1999-2000

Diabetes Hits Close to Home

Assemblymember Thomas Calderon wants to remind residents that diabetes is a major cause of heart and kidney disease, neurological disorders and loss of eyesight. If left untreated, diabetes could be lethal. In 1977 41 deaths per 100,000 were attributed to diabetes-related diseases in the 58th Assembly District. This potential killer can be stopped. For more information, call the Presbyterian Inter-Community Hospital at (562) 698-0811.

California students triumphed this year when the Legislature approved legislation by Assemblymember Thomas Calderon to increase beginning teacher salaries to a minimum \$32,000 per year.

AB 1117, which was signed by the Governor in June as part of the overall budget package, is designed to attract a larger, more qualified pool of applicants to address a massive teacher shortage.

Specifically, the budget trailer bill earmarked \$50 million for teacher salaries to create incentives for California school districts through grants to raise the starting salaries of fully credentialed first-year teachers to \$32,000 a year. The average starting wage for teachers previously was \$28,000.

"I introduced this bill because I wanted to create an incentive for school districts to raise their pay scales and make teaching more attractive so that young professionals really start looking at the classroom as a career, rather than a fallback opportunity," Calderon said.

It is estimated that California will need 300,000 new teachers over the next decade to address a teacher shortage caused by class size reduction, increased population and retirements.



"As more and more educators talk about running our schools like private sector companies, with goals, objectives and measurable outcomes to ensure accountability, we need to look at the incentives that are in place to attract people to our classrooms," Calderon said.

AB 1117 enhances this climate of professionalism in our schools by ensuring our teachers are paid a wage that adequately compensates them for the important task of educating and preparing our children for the future.

Calderon demands clean water	2
School Safety Summit	2
Calderon's legislative report card	2
Increased oversight of methadone clinics	3
Bill to reform Water Replenishment District	3
Latino Museum gets financial boost	3
Kohn named Woman of the Year	4

Hearing Focuses on State Funding for Schools

Looking toward future efforts to improve California's system of school finance, Assemblymember Calderon chaired a hearing of his Select Committee on School Funding Reform on November 23rd in the State Capitol.

During the hearing, Calderon heard from school finance experts, school superintendents, teachers and others about the difficulties associated with state funding. Among the experts were local educators Maggie Carrillo Mejia, superintendent of the Montebello Unified School District, and Anthony Avina, superintendent of the Whittier

Union High School District.

California's system of state funding for schools is generally the product of court decisions aimed at improving fairness in funding for all students and legislatively-created categorical monies targeted toward funding for special student needs.

This hearing is the first step in examining ways to improve both the method of state funding for our schools and ultimately the amount of state money we dedicate to our kids education, Calderon said.

Calderon Demands Clean Water in the San Gabriel Valley

An end to two decades of pollution in the San Gabriel Valley's underground aquifer may be in sight. As Chair of the Select Committee on San Gabriel Valley Groundwater Contamination, Assemblymember Thomas Calderon called a hearing in July and another hearing for late November to bring all of the stakeholders face to face to discuss the causes, effects and possible remedies for the contamination.

Plans to build water treatment facilities to clean the water in the Baldwin Park area were scrapped in 1997 after perchlorate, the chemical in rocket fuel, was discovered in the aquifer.

"I am angered that two decades later not a single polluter has been sued. A lawsuit would have prompted an investigation into the extent of the

damage to the environment," Calderon said. "I called the hearing because I wanted to know why this cleanup has taken so long. It is wrong for area residents to continue to pay for cleanup of their water bills while polluters avoid full financial responsibility."

Representatives from local businesses and community organizations, water agencies and the Federal Environmental Protection Agency attended the hearing. Negotiations between the EPA and businesses have intensified as a result of the meeting.

"Although we have not reached a final agreement, we have opened up a serious dialogue between all of the stakeholders," Calderon said. "I finally feel as if we are making some progress."



"Troubled adolescents need personal attention. There is a need for an environment that allows all children to freely discuss their feelings and their concerns with counselors, teachers, parents and peers."

School Safety Summit Addresses Student Security Issues

Student safety was foremost in people's minds following the tragic Columbine High School shooting. To deal with the issue of school safety on a regional level, Assemblymember Thomas Calderon invited school leaders and local law enforcement agencies to a School Safety Summit to discuss the problem of youth violence.

The discussion was designed to identify the sociological and emotional pressures students are facing today and develop ways community organizations and state legislators can work together to help address the problem.

Schools in the District have been addressing these issues for years. Numerous programs in local

school districts are already in place to offer children and teens alternatives to violent behavior and drugs. These activities provide outlets for youth to express themselves. Counseling is also available to students from elementary through high school.

"Troubled adolescents need personal attention," Calderon said. "There is a need for an environment that allows all children to freely discuss their feelings and their concerns with counselors, teachers, parents and peers."

As a result of the safety summit, school districts and local police agencies have exchanged ideas on ways to better secure schools, while also ensuring the counseling needs of students are being met.



Report Card: Calderon's Legislative Report Card

Assemblymember Thomas Calderon's active support of women and senior citizens was recently recognized by two nonprofit organizations, both of which gave him perfect ratings for the 1999 Legislative session.

Legislators were judged based on whether they supported bills that proposed a wide range of issues, from allowing employees to use sick leave to attend to ill family members to nursing home reform.

American Association of University Women - 100%

The American Association of University Women promotes equity for all women and girls, lifelong education and positive societal change.

Congress of California Seniors - 100%

The Congress of California Seniors takes stands on issues of importance to midlife and older persons and their families.

A+

State Increases Oversight of Methadone Clinics

Local government and law enforcement agencies have gained greater control over the regulation of methadone clinics through AB 930, which was authored by Assemblymember Thomas Calderon.

Calderon introduced the bill in response to past criminal activities that were occurring in the vicinity of a Pico Rivera methadone clinic last year. "With the signing of this bill, we are improving the regulation of methadone clinics by putting more control in the hands of local government and law enforcement officials," Calderon said. "AB 930 will help officials stop unethical methadone clinic

operators before clinics threaten the safety of surrounding communities or the health of their patients."

AB 930, which went into effect January 1, 2000, includes local input in the annual clinic inspection and requires the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs to increase penalties for clinics that allow illegal activities to take place. In addition, the law prevents applicants who have failed to operate a clinic legally from obtaining a new license in another location.

"With the signing of this bill, we are improving the regulation of methadone clinics by putting more control in the hands of local government and law enforcement officials."

Calderon Introduces Bill to Reform Water Replenishment District

Assemblymember Thomas M. Calderon has introduced legislation designed to completely revamp the Water Replenishment District (WRD) of Southern California, which has been under fire for widespread financial improprieties, poor planning, inadequate controls and rampant mismanagement.

Specifically, AB 1794 (Calderon) would:

- Require the WRD Board to be appointed by water producers. This would ensure that members had a vested interest in keeping rates low and service high.
- Require WRD to establish a competitive bidding process to allow for the public's and Board's review of all contracts, thereby eliminating the WRD's current practice of "sole-sourcing" its contracts.

A number of news agencies in Southern California have chronicled concerns with the District, including a report released by the California State Auditor on December 15, 1999, titled **"Water Replenishment District of Southern California:**

Weak Policies and Poor Planning have led to Excessive Water Rates and Questionable Expenses."

"The facts behind the WRD just don't add up," Calderon said. "For instance, since 1991 WRD assessments have increased 300 percent without significant increases in costs or services provided. The agency itself has also mushroomed from a 3-person staff to a staff of 29. And now that they're in this political stew, they have hired lobbyists and P.R. firms, at a cost of \$70,000 to \$100,000 per month, to fight pending legislation that would limit their ability to fund capital projects through the sale of bonds. This is an abuse of the public's trust and cannot be tolerated."

Reports indicate that the WRD's funding balance at the end of the fiscal year was \$49 million, which was 3 times the annual cost of groundwater replenishment. What's more, the WRD plans to issue \$38 million in bonds while still holding \$49 million in reserve.



Latino Museum Gets Financial Boost

The Latino Museum of History, Art and Culture in Los Angeles teaches Latino youth pride in their heritage and teaches all children to appreciate cultural differences. In an effort to support this cultural treasure, Assemblymember Thomas Calderon secured \$800,000 in State funding for the museum.

Opened in May 1995, the Latino Museum of History, Art and Culture in Los Angeles was established to educate children from Los Angeles County schools and youth centers. The museum provides hands-on classes and workshops for children and training to help teachers enhance their students' educational experience.

As the only museum to focus on Latino history, art

and culture, the Latino Museum presents exhibits, develops and disseminates information, sponsors educational programs and collects outstanding and representative examples of Latino culture.

"This money is an investment in our children, who will gain a sense of their cultural identity and self-esteem through the lessons they learn at the museum," said Calderon. "In addition, the Latino Museum offers people of all cultures an opportunity to learn about what Latinos have contributed to our State and the nation as a whole."

In 1996, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction designated the Latino Museum as the Regional Latino Heritage Resource Center for Southern California.

"The Latino Museum offers people of all cultures an opportunity to learn about what Latinos have contributed to our State and the nation as a whole."



Assemblymember Thomas Calderon

District Office
280 North Montebello Blvd.
Suite 102
Montebello, California 90640
Phone: 323.838.5858

Sacramento Office
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, California 94249-0058
Phone: 916.319.2058

Educator and Labor Leader Kathy Kohn Honored as Woman of the Year

Assemblymember Thomas Calderon selected one of the many excellent educators in the 58th Assembly District, Kathy Kohn, as the District's 1999 Woman of the Year.

Kohn has served as executive director of the Montebello Teachers Association (MTA) since 1993. Prior to that, she worked in the Montebello area as a teacher from 1984 to 1991 and served as president of the MTA from 1991 to 1993.

"As a former school board member, I had the opportunity to work with Kathy on many issues" Calderon said. "She has always been a passionate advocate for better schools and an inspiration to

students and her fellow teachers."

For the last 13 years, the California Women's Legislative Caucus has honored outstanding women from each of the State's districts. Every legislator chooses one woman residing in his or her district who has contributed to the community.

Kohn is Co-Chairperson of the Urban Teachers Organization in California and is a board member of the Montebello YMCA. She is also a member of the Montebello Rotary Club, California Democratic Central Committee and the Montebello Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee.

Calderon Plugs California Into Electrician Licensing

Under a bill authored by Assemblymember Thomas Calderon, electricians finally joined the long list of professionals who are required to be licensed by the state. Assembly Bill 931 strengthened worker and consumer safety by ensuring that electricians who connect high voltage devices are properly trained and certified.

"I find it unbelievable that professionals such as hair stylists, manicurists and boxing timekeepers must be licensed, but electricians, who are in our

homes, our schools and our workplaces were not," Calderon said. "Faulty connections can result in injury, even death, for electrical workers and the general public. We must ensure that those who do the work are well qualified."

The bill was sponsored by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association. It was also supported by the California Professional Firefighters and the California Fire Chiefs.

***"We must ensure
that those who do
the work are well
qualified."***